



— A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK FOR —

# Historic Cemeteries in South Asia and Community Engagement

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# Introduction

**O**ld Christian cemeteries in South Asia present both an opportunity and a challenge. Many are large sites lying in prominent parts of towns. They were first established on the outskirts of settlements, but as populations grew and habitations with them, old cemeteries are now found in central areas of cities, a green oasis in the middle of often polluted surroundings. So the opportunity to use these cemeteries for community activities is the subject of this BACSA Manual, the second in a series. Already some urban cemeteries have hosted musical concerts, open-air dramas and poetry reading, the chance for artists to display their works in an outdoor setting, and as an informal classroom for underprivileged children. Further suggestions include open-air workshops to study the refurbishment of heritage buildings, including the preparation and use of lime mortar and how to clean old brickwork and stucco.

Cemeteries attract their own enthusiasts too, particularly family historians, some of whom come from far afield (Europe, Australia, America, etc) to visit the graves of their ancestors. Historians find tombstone

inscriptions to notable figures, both local and foreign who contributed to South Asia's cultural, educational and political achievements. Botanists are attracted to the wealth of plants and trees growing profusely in old cemeteries while people interested in butterflies and birds will find them here in abundance.

The challenge arises from several sources. Not all pre-independence cemeteries are closed. There is still an active Christian community in South Asia needing burial spaces for relatives and a dignified place to mourn the departed. Usually these spaces lie at one end of the cemetery, which must be respected and not used for community activities. Vandalism is unfortunately frequent, not just the breaking down of cemetery walls, but the theft of iron railings and the lead lettering used in old inscriptions. Sites are marred by drug and alcohol users and encroachment, sometimes encouraged by those who should be guarding the cemeteries, does occur. Vegetation can take over completely, with trees uprooting old tombs, and small bushes penetrating the stucco covering the brickwork of monuments.

Before community activities can take place, the cemeteries must be made safe and hospitable – practical suggestions are found in this booklet. The importance of a cemetery management committee cannot be over-emphasized - people who will set up community activities, then manage and publicise them. Funding is important and useful suggestions are made here including areas set aside for plant nurseries, and renting out spaces, covered or uncovered, within the cemetery itself. Respect for the dead and provision for the living with community events and activities is the way forward.

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# Cemeteries can be more than just graveyards

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## 1.1

Cemeteries and burial grounds are an integral part of a Christian community. They are places near to their hearts as they are the resting place of their loved ones. They are often visited to pay respects, mourn the dead, and make offerings on special days. For many a cemetery is a place to retreat to in times of grief.

## 1.2

Cemeteries in South Asia are often owned by or are the responsibility of the churches and maybe run by a committee of trustees using funds generated through burials and annual maintenance charges. Cemeteries and burial grounds are often large, with meagre infrastructure, and manpower to run them. With diminishing Christian communities and increasing prices for labour, utilities and repair materials, it is becoming more and more difficult to maintain these cemeteries.



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*Cemeteries can become open green urban spaces*







*Cost of maintenance and repair is a major problem for cemeteries*



### 1.3

The problem may also increase manifold for cemeteries which are temporarily closed for new burials or are no longer functional as burial grounds. Some of these cemeteries are over two hundred years old and are important heritage sites. These sites soon lose their sanctity as a religious place as fewer and fewer family members visit them. Often with large open spaces, they become an attractive place for squatters and illegal occupation and trade. If located in prime urban areas, they are sometimes taken over illegally and developed for housing or commercial use.

### 1.4

Cemeteries have much more to offer than simply the function of being a burial ground. Given the large open land most cemeteries are blessed with, they become a big asset in a fast urbanising world as lungs for the fast-growing cities and its inhabitants. The inscriptions on tombs are a valuable resource for research in subjects including genealogy, architecture, history of diseases and trades, poetry and calligraphy, to name a few. They can also become public parks and gardens, orchards, and because of their size, are often home to birds, butterflies, moths and wild flowers, thus enhancing the environment. Such green spaces would be equally welcome both in dense urban areas and in the countryside.

### 1.5

Historic cemeteries have monuments of important personalities. Some of these monuments are very elaborate and ornamental with a high architectural value. Conservation of these monuments and efforts to promote them can draw a great many tourists, both local and foreign. Cemeteries can then become part of heritage trails and tourist itineraries. Genealogy tourism has also become very popular with more people getting involved in genealogy, and the increasing number of people who want to see for themselves the places where their ancestors lived, walked, worked, and loved. Genealogy research companies today bring a full “return to the homeland” experience for those who are researching their roots and looking to walk in the literal footsteps of their ancestors.







## 1.6

Cemeteries often have a very small community from the religious denomination that they serve. Even this community may not be well integrated and robust. Lack of an active community is the primary reason for the neglect and poor conditions of the historic cemeteries. The cemeteries have great potential for staying relevant if they are able to draw in people from all walks of life and become more active spaces. Not only would this add value, they could also be expanded to generate much needed revenue for the maintenance of the same and a much larger group that could help take care of them. Also, most cemeteries, originally established on the outskirts of towns, are now in the centre of busy urban areas and thus, valuable open spaces for the city and people living around them.



*Cemeteries form great centres of learning about culture & heritage*



## 1.7

Many interested organisations and individuals can be approached. They could include local churches, local descendants of those buried, cemetery neighbours, local and state authorities, local heritage and tourist bodies, neighbouring businesses, schools and colleges. One could draw their attention towards the advantages of supporting the cemetery. A cemetery contributing to its environment is welcome to the local authority. The police department values a cemetery free of undesirable intruders. It could be part of a town's tourism offer. A cemetery can also be a resource for education and research. A green cemetery in an urban area provides a park area for local people and nature lovers. A maintained cemetery improves the quality of its immediate environment. Neighbouring businesses can benefit from visitors' custom, and so on.



*They are often encroached from all sides if left unattended*



## 1.8

Some custodians, case studies of which we have included later, have explored some of the above avenues to generate funds for the improvement and subsequent management of their cemetery. Funds were generated through entrance fees, grants, donations, rentals, and socio-cultural events. The cemeteries are best suited to promote culture and environment because of the history buried there and the large open space they offer to any town or city.



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*They can become home to fast diminishing wildlife and also be home to biodiversity & many native species*



*Inscriptions are valuable for learning about different forms of lettering used in the past*





*Inscriptions on headstones form a great resource for learning calligraphy and poetry*

*Cemeteries are full of historical facts and stories*



## 1.9

Before any cemetery can attract a larger 'community' some planning and subsequent changes are needed that will transform it from a place of the dead to a place for the living. Sometimes the high walls surrounding cemeteries can signal that it is a 'private' space. Good community spaces are freely accessible physically, and visually; there are activities that happen periodically which people know and come back to; is a place where people come to socialise and to meet other like-minded people in a place that is clean, comfortable with seating areas, drinking water and, ideally, toilets. Whereas some community spaces develop automatically, such as cafeterias of public and educational institutions, extra effort has to be taken for places like cemeteries which people do not normally frequent and visit.

## 1.10

The cemeteries need to be rejuvenated both physically and in the memory of people. The process involves identifying the interested people, who have direct or indirect interest in the space, and can form its larger 'community'; evaluating the site for possibilities and constraints; starting simple community engagement activities to assess the response of the people and site; consequently developing a plan for the place; finding funding and donations for these intended changes and developing a system for its continued management.

*They can become great spaces for inspiring budding artists*





# Identification of the larger community

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## 2.1

If one wishes to enhance the utility of the cemetery, identifying the right people to build a community will be the first step. One needs to start with the representatives from public, private, and civic sectors to identify major concerns of different groups. The representatives will need to have some direct connection and interest in the space and a vested interest in the initiative's success.

## 2.2

The owners, users, neighbours, municipal bodies, tourists, visitors, tourism agencies, local and state government, researchers, and students form the major community of any cemetery. It can also include businesses adjacent to the space, cultural and religious organisations, as well as schools and colleges.



*Cemeteries are great for nature walks*





*They can bring together like minded people through various workshops*

*Historic cemeteries can become laboratories for learning restoration skills*



## 2.3

Cemeteries are usually not owned by individuals but by institutions like churches, trusts, state or central government. Some burial grounds may be part of land owned by a company or larger business group. In such cases the cemeteries may be governed by a group of trustees and the involvement of all or most of the trustees is important. Some cemeteries and graves in India are protected and maintained by the Archaeological Survey of India, but this manual is about those which are not.

## 2.4

A burial plot is purchased by a person sometimes in advance and is sometimes purchased by a family member after their demise. The plot is the property of the descendants of the person interred and may be used for burial of another family member after a stipulated number of years. These families form the core users of the cemeteries.

## 2.5

Cemeteries, especially historic cemeteries which were once on the outskirts of the city, in the wilderness, near other cemeteries and burial grounds, inside church compounds, are today due to the growing urbanisation situated within dense city areas often within private properties, tea estates, government and educational institutions. Depending on their location, in each case the neighbours are different but their involvement and engagement with the cemetery is of great importance.





## 2.6

Government officials are facilitators and partners in implementing the community's vision. The municipal corporations take care of refuse removal, lighting, repair of roads and other infrastructure needs. The police department maintains law and order in the area and thus they both become primary stakeholders.

## 2.7

Tourists and especially genealogy tourism can be considered as an important resource when working with historic cemeteries. Not only do people visit them for their historic value but recent years have seen a surge in people travelling long distances in search of their roots and ancestors.

## 2.8

Cemeteries are rich resources for education and research in the fields of history, literature, medicine, architecture, art and sculpture. Students and teachers from schools, colleges and universities can be engaged in developing cemeteries for the wider community.



*Cemeteries can be places for meditation  
& contemplation*







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## 2.9

With fast-reducing open areas, especially in urban areas, cemeteries offer the cities a much-needed park for the use of its citizens. They can also become a hot spot for nature lovers and enthusiasts. Cemeteries are natural sites for absorbing harmful carbons and so have a positive environmental effect.

## 2.10

Each cemetery is unique in location, neighbourhood, and size. Each has unique sets of possibilities and constraints. But intelligently observing and studying them will present a unique set of solutions and stakeholders who could be persuaded to form the community that can manage the cemetery in the future. This especially holds true for cemeteries that are located off the beaten track and are far away from the city or town. Special efforts may have to be made to attract the people who crave solitude or an experience of the countryside.



*They can become neighbourhood backyards for group activity*





# Community Engagement Planning

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*Cemeteries have great potential for becoming walking paths for the city. Areas can be used to grow vegetables and fruit which can be sold to raise funds. They can simply be places to relax in solitude.*





### 3.1

A community engagement plan needs to have a long-term vision. It will evolve with changing needs, thus has to be flexible with scope for developing financial independence and active and committed members. It also needs to have an in-built system for management and sustainability.

### 3.2

The plan could envisage multiple uses of the cemetery for people from all walks of life, age, and status. The increased footfall of visitors will keep the cemetery vibrant and a favoured destination for its regular users. Regular and annual programmes will ensure a loyal group and community.

### 3.3

Regular maintenance is a must for any public space and is usually expensive. The plan could propose systems that are economical and effective. A low monthly expense will go a long way to make the cemetery management sustainable for its owners.

### 3.4

It is important to identify a group of people who will help manage the cemetery and all the proposed activities. This group could consist of paid employees, volunteers, or trustees. A proper hierarchy and division of responsibilities may have to be worked out in advance to prevent chaos and miscommunication.

### 3.5

Revenue generation could be a major focus of the vision plan. Every cemetery needs a large sum of money to maintain. One would need activities such as shops, nurseries, etc. that can bring in money. If a cemetery is developed as a park, it can generate income through admission fees. Spaces can be constructed that could be rented, subject to planning regulations.



*Cemeteries can also encourage institutions and family members to get engaged*







❧ Cemeteries attract a lot of pilgrims ❧

### 3.6

Donations are a necessary way to raise funds if the cemetery can offer services that are useful to society, environment, or the neighbourhood. Biodiversity and climate change, social welfare activities, cultural programmes and tourism are some segments that can attract funders. The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Funding in India donates to many such projects.

### 3.7

Bank accounts, a transparent accounting system, and also responsible managers are needed for preparing all project proposals and maintaining the cash flow. Donors and funders are very strict and will expect proper accounts before releasing concurrent instalments.

### 3.8

Publicity is necessary to attract funders and donors and this should be carried out through social media, brochures and other channels. Some cemeteries have their own websites set up locally or by trustees. There are other websites like findagrave. com, Families In British India Society (FIBIS), and British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia (BACSA) which carry valuable information about cemeteries. A few people could be engaged in the documentation and proper and timely dissemination of this information.

### 3.9

Any community engagement project needs not only a clear vision but also a clear timetable for its execution. What happens to the community programme at the end of its stipulated time must be discussed.

### 3.10

Infrastructure both in terms of buildings and human resource has to be developed within the vision plan. As this has to be estimated and budgeted, it is useful for every cemetery to engage volunteers or professionals for its various programmes and activities.



# Programmes for engaging the community

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## 4.1

Some neighbourhoods may lack a sense of community and social identity, so participation in events with goals that affect their daily lives can be organised regularly. These activities may be different for each group.

## 4.2

Key questions to consider in community participation programmes depend on their interests. Who is interested in having things change? Are they willing to participate in some way using their talents or funds? Are there existing organisations that could provide long-term management for the space, etc?



*Cemeteries can be peaceful  
centres of learning*



## 4.3

These programmes could be organised by owners or by another agency engaged for this purpose. The organisers need to have a fair knowledge of the process of community engagement, handling crowds, and effectively engaging them such that they are able to mould the thinking of the participants towards the desired end.

## 4.4

In the case of a cemetery, the regular users would be the family members who visit the graves of those interred. They may be interested in developing facilities like a flower shop or helping organise programmes around All Souls Day, Easter, and other festivals. They may be interested in growing flowers and vegetables for sale helping maintain the cemetery.





## 4.5

Cemeteries best support the green revolution if they can be transformed into urban parks. Citizens could be drawn through workshops, nature walks, nurseries, and educational programmes centred around environment. Cemeteries far away from the city, in rural areas, could think of using the land to develop orchards and other revenue generation woodlands.

## 4.6

If cemeteries are large enough, and green enough, they can serve the neighbourhood as jogging parks and walking paths. Neighbours can be invited to form a group of morning walkers which not only meets for health but also for social interaction.

## 4.7

Regular stakeholder meetings, cultural programmes, and other get-togethers could be organised where the officials of governing bodies could be invited. They could then be briefed about the vision and proposed plan of action prepared for the development of the cemetery.



*Conservation of monuments in cemeteries offer a great learning opportunity*

*Schools & colleges of architecture can be engaged for discussion*





## 4.8

Local and foreign tourists and visitors can be drawn to a cemetery if it is developed to enhance features which are of architectural, cultural, historical or natural interest. Tours, talks, and interpretation material could be prepared and disseminated to promote tourism. For some cemeteries like Agra and Rawalpindi, BACSA has produced attractive Cemetery Records books which can be offered for sale to local and international tourists.

## 4.9

Cemeteries could invite school and college students for educational visits, offer volunteer ships, internships, and scholarships to study various aspects of the cemetery. The cemetery could hold literary and story-telling sessions for the general public and their children.

## 4.10

The programmes would need to be regular, focused and organised to engage a large group such that community members eventually feel committed enough to the cemetery to organise themselves into a group dedicated for the upkeep of the cemetery and its future well-being.



*Cemeteries are an important resource to study art, design and construction methods*



*Schools and colleges can be approached for schools trips*



# Development of Infrastructure & Manpower

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## 5.1

Community programmes need some form of organised activities, spaces for sitting and reading, book shops, study material, maps, library, etc to support the activities. There is thus a need to develop some infrastructure and a managerial setup to run these activities.

## 5.2

For any type of public space, one needs to have a defined boundary with a prominent entry, enquiry area, gate, and preferably notice boards for display of general notices and announcements. Parking spaces outside and clean public toilets inside the cemetery would be very useful. This is something that websites and notice boards could mention.



*Various areas in the cemetery can be developed for play areas*



### 5.3

Different activities will need different types of spaces. For large crowds, large open areas and halls for inclement weather may be required. Cemeteries may need to be re-designed and developed for such spaces. Smaller spaces may be needed for quiet contemplation and for small groups to gather.

### 5.4

Proper landscape planning can transform a cemetery into an urban park. It can have walking and jogging paths, trees, vegetable and flower beds for visitors. Nurseries can be developed to educate and engage visitors. Regular gardeners could be employed for this.

*Nurseries also form a useful addition to a cemetery*



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## 5.5

Cemeteries often have beautiful graves and monuments of high architectural, historical and cultural value. These monuments can be conserved, provided with plaques easily accessible with signage to attract tourists and visitors.

## 5.6

Paths for walking, handicap access, toilet facilities for men and women, and drinking water fountains are often mandatory for any public space. It has also become a norm to provide CCTV camera surveillance for such places including proper lighting both during the day and night.

## 5.7

The cemeteries would need to develop brochures, maps, other information for distribution to tourists & visitors. This requires planning and research, including regular documentation of programmes and events. Displaying all this information in an interpretation centre would greatly benefit the community programme.

## 5.8

The information can also be disseminated through the various social media platforms including a dedicated website, Facebook, Twitter, etc. WhatsApp messenger is a useful platform to connect the community and keep it updated about the latest events and programmes.

## 5.9

It is hoped that the volunteers from the community would come up and offer their services for the vision development and help execute the various programmes. Later, if need and funds permit, a group of consultants, managers, accountants, guides, and researchers could be invited to help visualise, research and design the content.

## 5.10

Once the plan for the community programme is in place, one needs to assess the expenditure and plan of action needed to achieve the desired results. One would need both short-term and long-term goals and some scope for flexibility and experimentation for an optimum long-term project.



*Spacious cemetery grounds are ideal for informal meetings involving owners, government officials, family members, neighborhood residents, and various stakeholders like local heritage organizations and academics.*





# Funding, Sustainability, & Management

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## 6.1

One of the primary goals of a community programme is to develop the cemetery such that it opens up several avenues for funding. Normally a cemetery would be supported by a church and generate income from its burial activities. In the case of an historic cemetery, which is not operational/in use, raising maintenance funds can be very challenging.

## 6.2

Funding for activities can be obtained from various agencies that support issues related to culture, history, environment, social welfare, and tourism to name a few. Once the cemetery has been developed each of these avenues can be explored for funding. A case study of the Scottish Cemetery Conservation Project, Kolkata is a good example.



*Running social welfare programmes for the neighbourhood helps in developing ownership*





### 6.3

Income can be generated through tickets, flower shops, nurseries, and other activities. Some cemeteries have been known to offer their large open spaces for parking and if there are suitable buildings they can be rented out for events. The rental is a good source of income for the maintenance of the cemetery. Some cemeteries use their boundary walls for advertisements. The South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata has employed some of these systems.

### 6.4

Owners of historic cemeteries that lie within large campuses often take care of them. They have been known to use their own funds and to raise funds from their alumni and other sources to keep the cemetery in good condition. Conservation of the Lovedale Cemetery, Ooty was funded by the alumni of the college.

### 6.5

Women's and children's welfare is a high priority for funders in almost all countries. If the cemetery is situated in an under-privileged neighbourhood, running social welfare programmes not only helps the local community, but helps utilise an under-used urban space, and opens up a great opportunity for funding. Doctors and nurses could be attracted to hold informal consultations to help local people. They could wait in the quiet green place while waiting to be seen. The Scottish Cemetery Conservation Project, Kolkata runs such a social welfare programme.



*Involving the locally elected members of the government can be a great help*





## 6.6

Development of a strong community base providing a regular stream of prospective members who can help maintain and manage the cemetery, is the second important goal of the community programme. One should never lose sight of this while organising the activities.

## 6.7

An annual calendar based on the above goals could be prepared and followed to enable the community members to engage with the cemetery regularly. Such calendars help form local traditions which people look forward to and the cemetery then becomes a regular place to be visited with friends and family.

## 6.8

Evaluation and regular assessment is an absolute must. The community programme is a 'project' set up to revitalise the cemetery and revive its memory in the minds of the community. The programme could ideally be assessed regularly and modified to align it to its intended purpose as the cemetery evolves.



*One can engage the community through drawing competitions*



*The Church and its members can help in engaging the community through various programmes*



## 6.9

Maintaining systems that encourage transparency and accountability in all dealings will ensure that the project and all its programmes run smoothly and efficiently. Building a small core team to handle the project is necessary. The core members could be volunteers or consultants and professionals.

## 6.10

Keeping the community members involved can make or break the project. Ensuring that the vision of the cemetery always mirrors the goals of the people involved is the most important part of the process. Adapting the management plan in accordance with changing circumstances also ensures that the space is well loved and well used over time.

*Open air workshops where possible are also a great attraction*



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## Lovedale Cemetery, Ootacamund

Major General Sir Henry Montgomery Lawrence (1806-1857), voluntary soldier, surveyor and philanthropist along with his brothers Alexander and George started an endowment to provide asylum and subsequently schooling to the orphaned children of British soldiers in India whose numbers were growing in the mid nineteenth century. The institutions were established in Sanawar (in 1846), Mount Abu (in 1856), and Ghora Galli (in 1860) and in the then Toda land of the blue mountains in Nilgiri (called Whote Mund or Whatacaymund that turned into Ootacamund in 1867).

These became educational institutes with the name of the Lawrence Schools. The Lawrence School in Ootacamund also has its own (first European) cemetery. It is a peaceful heritage precinct with 142 tombs, including a few of fairly recent times. The school along with the alumni, took the initiative in 2018 to collect funds to conserve this cemetery, generously supported by BACSA. The school continues to take care of this cemetery as an important part of their heritage.



© BACSA



Conserved Lovedale Cemetery





## South Park Street Cemetery, Kolkata



The South Park Street Cemetery in Kolkata started in 1767, formerly known as the 'Great Christian Burial Ground', was one of the earliest non-church cemeteries in the world. The cemetery houses numerous graves and monuments belonging to British soldiers, administrators, and their families. It is also the final resting place of several prominent personalities, including Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Sir William Jones. It is located on Mother Teresa Sarani (also known as Park Street), Central Kolkata, India.

Even though a marble plaque at the cemetery gate reads "South Park Street, Opened:1767, Closed:1790", the burials continued till the 1830s, until a vast new cemetery was opened to the east of the Lower Circular Road. Managed by the Christian Burial Board, despite its high value as a 'heritage' site, the trustees have found it difficult to raise enough money to maintain the cemetery. They currently generate funds through entry tickets; selling plants from their well developed nursery; renting their boundary wall for advertisements; and renting out the open areas for book readings etc.



*Nursery developed at South Park Street Cemetery to generate income has helped increase the footfall of people from other communities*





# Scottish Cemetery, Kolkata



The Scottish Cemetery, another historic cemetery in Kolkata, established in 1820, fell into disuse after the 1950s. The owners, St. Andrew's Church, with their limited size of congregation and financial resources, could not raise enough funds to maintain the cemetery.

In 2008 a charity from Scotland, The *Kolkata Scotland Heritage Trust* took up the initiative to return this cemetery to its former glory. Since the money for

Recognition by national & international heritage bodies awarded to the cemetery

Group from Shillong to honour the tomb of Rev. Thomas Jones



the conservation was to be raised primarily in Scotland, they studied the possible areas that could interest possible funders, benefit the locals, and help conserve the cemetery.

Heritage and tourism, community led urban regeneration and social development, mitigation of climate change, and research were identified as the core areas of the project. Monuments of high aesthetic and cultural value were selected and conserved. A community programme with the neighbourhood to teach children and adults was initiated. The cemetery was developed as a biodiversity conservation urban park. Students and teachers from schools and colleges were invited for workshops, internships, and collaborations. Pathways, toilets, and an interpretation centre were developed to facilitate the increasing footfalls. Today the cemetery has taken on a new look and attracts locals and foreigners, who visit to learn, relax, and participate in the landscape designed for inclusivity and biodiversity.

The cemetery has also been registered as a 'Green Landscape'



## Wombwell Cemetery, South Yorkshire, United Kingdom

The *Friends of Wombwell Cemetery* started in early 2002 as a 'Cemetery Watch' group, which was a subsidiary of Wombwell's Neighbourhood Watch branch at the time. A meeting was put in place to form the cemetery group after a lady was attacked and robbed at her husband's grave, which stirred up emotions in the community and made people feel unsafe when visiting their family graves. Following the meeting, a number of local volunteers stepped forward to form the group.

The cemetery was in a poor state. The perimeter railings had vanished from the stone walls, headstones were falling down and there was nowhere to sit and remember loved ones. There were two large, unmarked mass graves for babies and young children, and two Grade II listed chapels stood derelict – one with its roof and interior gutted by a fire years ago.

The cemetery was a morbid place, known for anti-social behaviour, and its history and the people buried within were quickly being forgotten. As a result, it became The Friends'



### *Information and brochures for the public*

mission to make the cemetery a cleaner, greener, safer space for the community. After years of hard work, The Friends restored the railings, added two memorials to the babies, installed benches and taps, and more recently, renovated the two chapels after receiving considerable funding. The roof was not replaced on the fire-damaged chapel and this is now a Peace Garden with memorial plaques and benches. The second chapel serves as a 'Community hub', where The Friends meet and host events.

The group became an official charity, and in 2005 it received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. It has since received various other awards over the past 21 years for its voluntary work. It now maintains its clean, green, safe space to a high standard for all who visit by completing maintenance jobs, researching history, hosting events and regular coffee mornings, and sharing stories of those who are laid to rest in the cemetery so that they can live on for generations to come.



## Kala Khani (Pines) Cemetery, Nainital

There is an ambitious plan to transform this old cemetery into a 'memorial park' where visitors can celebrate the gift of life as perceived through the five senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, as well as respecting the dead. This is explained in the informative and interpretive material on display.

The plan is called the 'Sensorium Project' in the Memorial Park at the Old Pines Cemetery, Nainital, a hill station developed by the British and centred around two lakes. This cemetery was established primarily for military burials and contains 16 burials from First World War casualties. These are cared for by the British-based Commonwealth War Graves Commission. The Sensorium Project is designed by Compartment S4, a collaborative group of eight architects, graduates of the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT) University, Ahmedabad. They describe themselves as a unique practice, which has come together 'with their passion for design, sustainability and vigour to do something good for society'.

The woodwork and metalwork in the Lychgate building is being carefully restored (May 2023) and the surrounding area is being repaved. While directing visitors down the steps towards the burial area, an arcade inside the entrance forms two small alcoves, one on each side of the lychgate, which now constitute a small exhibition area. Here a text reads: 'Death is a part of life, as opposed to being considered as opposites. There are two contrasts that go hand-in-hand. The Sensorium is, therefore, a celebration of life as perceived through the five senses, coursing through the cemetery, a symbol of death. Thus both these contrasts lay side-by-side just as it is in reality. While one pays respect to the dead, one also shows gratitude to the gift of life that they have received'. A list of the nine interpretive panels explains: About the Sensorium; Introduction to the Senses; Vision Installation; Sound Installation; Spiritual Culvert; Smell Installation; Taste Installation; Circle of Life; Touch Installation. It is an imaginative example of how an old cemetery can become a community asset today.



*Sensory park to  
help promote tourism*





# Check List and Action Plan

for those who wish to preserve the open green space of a cemetery for private remembrance and as a public amenity.

- [ 1 ] Establish who owns the cemetery and whether it is closed or open for burials.
- [ 2 ] How is the cemetery managed and funded? Does it face any particular problems like lack of funding, management, or security issues?
- [ 3 ] What special advantages are worth promoting in the cemetery? Are there interesting or historic burials? Do the monuments have a high level of craftsmanship? Does the cemetery have large open grounds and big trees?
- [ 4 ] Is there already a core group interested in promoting the cemetery for community use or can such a group be formed?
- [ 5 ] List the organisations to approach: local churches; local descendants of those buried; cemetery neighbours; local and state authorities; local heritage and tourist bodies; neighbourhood businesses; schools and colleges; local police.
- [ 6 ] Draft a presentation explaining to potential partners why they should support your proposals:
  - a) A cemetery contributing to its environment is welcome to the local authority.
  - b) The police department values a cemetery free of undesirable intruders.
  - c) An historic cemetery can be part of a town's tourism offer.
  - d) A cemetery can be a resource for education and research.
  - e) A green cemetery in an urban area provides a park area for local people and nature lovers.
  - f) A maintained cemetery improves the quality of its immediate surroundings.
  - g) Neighbouring businesses can benefit from visitor' custom.
- [ 7 ] Form a small group of volunteer partners (stakeholders) to manage the cemetery and its activities.
- [ 8 ] Hold regular meetings to develop a vision plan that addresses the problems and challenges faced by the cemetery and how they could be tackled.
- [ 9 ] Lists ways to to generate funding: apply for grants, establish a plant nursery, rent out unused spaces, and set up a crafts/ heritage workshop.
- [ 10 ] Draw up a plan for maintenance, including the walls, gatehouse/ gates, the tombs themselves, trees and plants. Establish toilets and CCTV where feasible.
- [ 11 ] Suggest programmes to be held in the cemetery for local scholars, artists, actors, poets, writers, historians and musicians, so that it becomes a creative hub. If the cemetery is large, develop a route in it for walkers and space for exercise and yoga.
- [ 12 ] Set up programmes for local underprivileged children in the cemetery. Celebrate national holidays and Christian festivals – Easter, All Souls' Day and Christmas.
- [ 13 ] Encourage the local neighbours to develop outreach programmes reflecting their own interests and needs.
- [ 14 ] Publicise the activities of the cemetery through social media, newspapers, and podcasts.
- [ 15 ] Ask for feedback from people using the cemetery for the activities listed above and be prepared modify the vision plan as and when needed.







BACSA aims to bring together people with a concern for the many hundreds of European cemeteries, isolated graves and monuments in South Asia. It offers grants to help with repairs and conservation works for these. See our website for more information: [www.bacsa.org.uk](http://www.bacsa.org.uk)

BACSA has funded a substantial number of conservation projects in South Asia, not only in the Indian sub-continent, which includes India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, but also in Myanmar (Burma), and Malaysia.